“Intricacies and Interdependencies”: Cecilia Beaux and the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts

Cecilia Beaux’s sophisticated conception of the enterprise of a portrait painter acknowledged the multiple interactions between creator, subject, and medium. For a lecture she presented at Simmons College she wrote, “In this collaboration between personality, artist and material, there must be exercised infinite reconciliations, shiftings, compromises—exchanges between the absolute—(that is, the weight and momentum of the personality) and the flexible power of line, modelling and color. . . . But to go into the intricacies and interdependencies of the interchange between spirit and matter . . . all of this would be an endless story.” Were she to look from our contemporary vantage she might also endorse it as an apt characterization of the complex and long-lived relationship that she enjoyed with the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts.

The contours of Beaux’s training, career, and artistic legacy are intimately tied to the Pennsylvania Academy’s educational curriculum, its students, faculty, and administration, and its collections and exhibitions. Close examination of the artist’s involvement with the Academy reveals a fortuitously synergistic association that, rather than abating, has increased and strengthened since the artist’s death nearly sixty years ago.

The Pennsylvania Academy’s Beaux collection, numbering nearly one hundred items, contains paintings, drawings and sketchbooks created from the early 1870s to the mid-1930s. In addition to the works of art, com-

1 “Portraiture," manuscript for a lecture delivered at Simmons College, May 14, 1907, Cecilia Beaux Papers, Smithsonian Institution, Archives of American Art, (hereafter, Beaux papers, AAA) microfilm roll 428.
lementary archival holdings of correspondence, administrative records, and photographs chronicle virtually her entire career and reflect the forces, both public and behind the scenes, that shaped her career as the doyenne of American portraiture. Her complex bonds to the institution, as a student, an exhibitor, a juror for its annual exhibitions, a member of the faculty, and recipient of the institution’s most prestigious prizes, are embedded in these materials. The appropriateness of the Academy as a repository for such a collection cannot be overstated; as it supports the institution’s mission to educate art students and interpret the history of American art through the development of important collections, exhibitions and publications.

The Academy’s pattern of acquiring Beaux’s work reflects recognition of her importance, not only by the institution itself, but also on the part of the artist’s family, her patrons, and their descendants. For example, New England Woman (Mrs. Jedediah H. Richards, née Julia Leavitt, fig. 8), one of Beaux’s career-defining works, was purchased from the annual exhibition of 1896, while other seminal paintings, such as Mother and Daughter (Mrs. Clement Acton Griscom and Frances Canby Griscom) (fig. 9) and A Little Girl (Fanny Travis Cochran), (see Connors, fig. 2), were donated by the sitters. In 1989, the artist’s great-niece, Cecilia (Drinker) Saltonstall, gave the institution Les derniers jours d’enfance (see Tappert, fig. 4), the extraordinary painting that marked the young artist’s debut as a gifted painter and promising professional. Moreover, the Pennsylvania Academy’s collection has been immeasurably enhanced by two paintings that were acquired through a combination of gift and purchase: Gertrude and Elizabeth Henry (1898–99), a 1986 acquisition made possible by funds from descendants and relatives of the sitters, and Harold and Mildred Colton (see Yount, fig. 1), a recent acquisition facilitated by the partial gift of Captain and Mrs. J. Ferrell Colton.

The expository power of the collection pivots on the singular contribution of Beaux’s nephew, Henry Sandwith Drinker. In 1950 he gave the Academy oil sketches, drawings, sketchbooks and archival materials. Significant in

2 Beaux’s Academy affiliations are: student, 1876–78; faculty, 1895–1916; exhibitor in the annual exhibitions, almost yearly from 1879 to 1935, and one person shows, in 1907 and 1974; juror, six times; winner of the Mary Smith Prize, in 1885, 1887, 1891, and 1892, the Temple Medal for the best painting, in 1900, and the Gold Medal of Honor in 1898; lecturer: “The Public and Modern Art” and “Portraiture,” in 1908, and “What American Artists Owe To France,” in 1916.

3 Academy faculty routinely bring students to the museum vaults to examine Beaux’s drawn and painted studies for the finished oils in the collection. See the essay by Patrick Connors in this volume.
terms of both size (nearly eighty works) and contour (amateur, student, commercial, and process-oriented works), Drinker's material provides a context for the explication of the major oils, and aligns the documentary and artistic dimensions. A broad chronological view of the collection's development suggests that Beaux's nephew created the milieu for its growth, since prior to his donation, she was represented by only one oil painting, *New England Woman*, and one drawing, *Shell Studies* (ca. 1875), donated by Drinker in 1942.

Taken as a whole, the Academy's resources not only support and encapsulate Tara Tappert's thesis that Beaux's life and career were shaped by her choices but also provide insights about the complex forces that influenced those choices, governed their outcomes, and secured her enduring reputation. Thus, while several aspects of Beaux's career may be better represented by future additions to the Academy's collection, its current holdings provide the most comprehensive survey of her educational, aesthetic, and professional pursuits.

One of the collection's great strengths is its delineation of Beaux's professional training and the nature of her earliest artistic endeavors. Generally, the works she produced as an amateur and youthful art student testify to an independent, self-directed course of study that was broad in scope yet clearly circumscribed in terms of skill acquisition and interests. Far from being idiosyncratic, the artist's early education mirrors some of the experiences of others of her generation in Philadelphia. It is clear that she understood prevailing trends in the larger art world, and was aware of the particular issues that she faced as a young woman with professional aspirations. In the decades prior to the 1876 opening of the Pennsylvania Academy's Furness and Hewitt building, hopeful young artists encountered a variety of fragmented resources. Among those embraced by Beaux were drawing manuals by James Duffield Harding (1868–1870), studio instruction from Catharine Ann Drinker (later Mrs. Thomas Allibone Janvier) (1871–1872), private training with Adolf Van der Wielen (1872–1874), and visits to prominent private art collections in the area, namely those of Henry C.

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Gibson and John S. Phillips, both of which were subsequently donated to the Pennsylvania Academy.\(^5\)

One of the artist’s juvenile sketchbooks, dating from about 1868 to 1870 (Sketchbook #1), chronicles the encounter of picturesque subjects, such as rural workers carrying their tools, and drawing exercises from the pages of Harding’s *Lessons on Trees* (London, 1850). Recent scholarship indicates that the manual by Harding (1798–1863), John Ruskin’s onetime drawing master and sketching companion, served as a source for the development of the drawing skills of Thomas Eakins (1844–1916), one of Beaux’s close contemporaries.\(^6\) Beaux’s studies from Harding range from copies after his plates to the application of Harding’s lessons in rendering scenes observed from nature (contained in the later Sketchbook #2, see Katus, figs. 1 and 2). In the earlier sketchbook the young artist tackled simple exercises that increase in complexity from leaves to branches to trees to landscape vignettes. Some drawings focus on variations in light on the same foliage clusters or branches, while others encourage the development of hatching skills and a vocabulary of strokes. The value of Harding’s exercises resided not only in their cultivation of manual control and tonal range, but also in the discernment and selection of elements and scenes in nature worthy of the artist’s attention.

Recollecting the moment when she received Harding’s books at age thirteen, Beaux wrote,

> she [her aunt Eliza Leavitt] returned from town one day with a small package of lithographs, drawings by the English artist, Harding. They were in outline only and were the simplest form of presentment of a small house and tree, careful studies of leafy boughs, stones with a neighbor weed, or plantain drawn with fond attention to every curve and curl of large leaves. I was entirely ready to undertake what was suggested, that I should try to copy one of them. Harding was a true artist. Every touch had quality and charm.\(^7\)

\(^5\)For a description of Beaux’s training see Tappert, “Choices,” chaps. 2, 3. The collections of Henry C. Gibson and John S. Phillips were donated to the Academy in 1892 and 1876 respectively.


\(^7\) Cecilia Beaux, *Background with Figures* (New York, 1930), 43.
Her remarks indicate that she recognized, as contemporary scholar George Landow notes, Harding's "expressive rather than mimetic aim." Harding held the opinion that "in viewing a beautiful work of art, we are not so much affected by the faithful imitation of nature which it may display, as we are touched by the sentiment which impelled the artist to produce it: what we thus see is less felt as a copy of nature, than as an embodiment of feelings which nature has inspired." Harding also maintained that "much of what is called a knowledge of Nature is to be found in the study of the impressions she makes on the mind, and the causes to which they may be ascribed."

Of equal if not greater importance to Beaux's artistic education were the visits she made with her Uncle Will (William Foster Biddle) and Catharine Ann Drinker to the homes of collectors Henry C. Gibson and John S. Phillips. Of the visit to Gibson's collection Beaux remembered, "The 'Angelus' itself was there. . . . Of course, the picture had a central position, where its romantic dignity made the paintings near it look common. This I dumbly felt. The idea of the French peasant and his life, I met first here. . . . On one wall bloomed in foamy splendor Cabanel's 'Birth of Venus'. . . . It was not one of my friends among the group of pictures." Recalling her excitement on viewing a canvas by Giovanni Boldini, she wrote "but the mystery of the painting was quite another thing. It is sometimes difficult to separate memory from later knowledge, but I am still thrilled by the recollection of those fresh, pure strokes, mixed with morning light, the pearly light of France, strokes so enigmatical when examined, . . . yet so sure, with the firmness of reality when one walked away." While it would take some time and years of training for the impact of this experience to surface, both her choice of French school and instructors, and the stylistic features of her mature work were, no doubt, affected by it.

While she found visits to Phillips's extraordinary collection of prints equally thrilling, they may have had more practical relevance to the
application of her drawing skills in the commercial arena of lithography and, later, in the burgeoning field of industrial arts, including china painting. For example, the Academy's Beaux collection contains a trio of shell studies that were probably produced for the U. S. Geological Survey where Professor Edward Drinker Cope, a relative, engaged her.12

While study with Adolph Van der Wielen certainly sharpened her powers of observation and rendering, she may have found it less than inspiring. The collection also contains a drawing of a cube that may date from an early moment under his tutelage. She credited her dislike of cubist art to the tedium of rendering geometric shapes. She noted, “above all, the mechanical forms were abhorrent to me, and I think that my immediate revulsion from cubism, years afterwards, was due in part at least to the recollection of the machine-made angles and ruled edges that I had shrunk from in my student days.”13

At the age of twenty-three Beaux undertook educational and professional endeavors that demonstrated an intrepid spirit of exploration and experimentation, a pattern that would remain throughout her life. The earliest documentary evidence of her encounter with the administration of the Pennsylvania Academy, in 1878, reveals the clarity of purpose and tenacious resolve that advanced her artistic education and prefigured the directness with which she conducted herself as a mature artist within the institution's scope. On June 10, 1878, Beaux and her friend Rebekah Furness petitioned the board of directors to copy a head from Wittkamp's *Deliverance of Leyden* (1851). While the request was approved the same day, the two petitioners must not have been notified by the time they produced another permission bearing the palsied countersignature of Christian Schussele, the then-ailing head of the school. The annotations of board secretary John Corliss capture the administration's frustration with the young women who probably appeared impatient, if not selfish and headstrong. With a canny eye to posterity Corliss wrote, “N.B. It was not intended that Prof. Schussele should be troubled to write his signature. If the ladies, annoyed by what they

the lonely halls and rooms below; all the concentration and purpose toward perfection, . . . were 'meat convenient for me,' that for which my appetite was strong and joyful.”

12 Tappert, “Choices,” 48ff. See also PAFA, *Cecilia Beaux*, 43–44.
considered to be too much ‘red tape’ had not rushed to carry the matter through their own way, they could have been advised so as to avoid this.14

Beaux’s request to make a copy, her subsequent attendance at Camille Piton’s National Art Training School to study china painting, and early works in the Academy’s collection make it evident that there were students with professional aspirations who constituted a sort of shadow culture within the school. As Thomas Eakins was instituting a rigorous academic program based on his own experiences at France’s Ecole des Beaux-Arts, and securing press coverage of his program’s success, less rigorous and, perhaps, more self-directed, entrepreneurial study was undertaken by Beaux and other students outside Eakins’s influence.15 A significant group of works that Beaux exhibited at the Academy beginning in 1879 (one example is in its collection) reveals a pointed lack of influence from Eakins or his curriculum. A crayon entitled Elaine (ca. 1879, location unknown) inspired by Arthurian legend, was the artist’s first contribution to the annual exhibitions in 1879. From 1880 to 1883, she showed examples of her china painting. Those works depended not only on Piton’s technical instruction, but also on a Ruskinian “truth to nature” philosophy embodied in Harding’s lessons. A charming illustrated and decorated poem entitled Doubtless Neither Stars Nor Flowers (fig. 1) from the early 1880s, considered with Elaine, anchors Beaux in a decidedly British, literary and anti-academic paradigm.16

In this context Beaux’s first major easel painting, Les derniers jours d’enfance (see Tappert, fig. 4) may be rightly understood both as a stunning achievement and evidence of the incredible impact of William Sartain’s

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14 Cecilia Beaux and Rebekah Furness to PAFA, June 10 and 12, 1878, PAFA Archives.
15 Beaux, Background, 86–87. Beaux’s Uncle Will may have shared the perspective of the angry parent who asked in an oft-quoted letter to the Academy “Does it pay, for a young lady of a refined godly household to be urged as the only way of obtaining a knowledge of true art, to enter a class where every feeling of maidenly delicacy is violated, where she becomes so hardened to indelicate sights and words, so familiar with the persons of degraded women and the sight of nude males, that no possible art can restore her lost treasure of chaste and delicate thoughts?” (R.S. to PAFA, Apr. 12, 1882, PAFA Archives) Sentiments such as these would contribute to Eakins’s dismissal in 1886.
16 See Tappert, “Choices,” 83ff. Tappert has unearthed further evidence of Beaux’s work as an illustrator with the discovery of “Uncle John’s Coat,” an illustrated poem that appeared in the January 1885 issue of St. Nicholas. This work suggests that Beaux considered the illustration of literary works as a viable professional path. The aesthetic that informs “Doubtless Neither Stars” would be popularized by Kate Greenaway, Ruskin’s protégée in the 1890s.
tutelage. The exceptional nature of this work is doubly evident when one considers the young artist's relative lack of experience painting on such a scale at this point in her career. She noted in her autobiography that "the 'less than life' conception of the figures; as they sat, back in the picture, with as absolute a foreground to 'place' them, would have usually required more experience than I possessed." Her contribution to the 1884 annual exhibition, a watercolor portrait of Edmund James Drifton Coxe (fig. 2),

18 Beaux, Background, 93.
reflected her commercial work as a china painter and copyist. Viewers expecting more of the same in 1885 were surprised and delighted by *Les derniers jours d'enfance*, an artistically complex and powerful double portrait of Beaux's sister, Etta, and her son, Henry. The work embodies Aesthetic Movement principles in its bold design and limited palette. Through sensitive handling the depth and tenderness of the maternal bond is portrayed without overt sentimentality. The same gentle tone and painterly accomplishment may be found in *A Quiet Hour* (1885; Westmoreland Museum of American Art, Greensburg, Pennsylvania), a portrait of her grandmother, Cecilia Kent Leavitt, that was shown in the same exhibition.
The artist fully acknowledged the importance of the European-trained Sartain’s instruction and criticisms in her painterly development. Erroneously credited as an Eakins student in contemporary newspaper reviews when her portrait *Ethel Nelson Page* (1883–84; National Museum of Women in the Arts, Washington, D.C.) was first exhibited, she quickly wrote to Sartain to express her regret. She said,

I never expected it to be noticed at all, and I am annoyed to see that what merit there is in it should be accredited to the Academy and Mr. Eakins. I owe very little to the Academy and nothing whatsoever to Eakins. You have really been my only instructor, and the enlightenment that I have had from you in the last three years will never cease to make itself felt in what I may do in the future. I am therefore extremely sorry that as an opportunity is given to exhibitors for so doing I did not enter my name in the catalogue as your pupil. I shall certainly do so at the next exhibition, and shall hope to do you more credit then than now.\(^\text{19}\)

When *Les derniers jours d'enfance* won the prestigious Mary Smith prize, Beaux was recognized as one of the city’s most promising talents. Through the prize she became associated with Susan Macdowell, who had received the first award (1879), Catharine Drinker Janvier (1880), and her friend Emily Sartain (1881, 1883).

The following year brought Beaux’s first appointment to an annual exhibition jury. Selected to serve in 1887 by her peers—artists who exhibited in the previous year’s exhibition—Beaux joined George Lambdin (chair), Emily Sartain, Frank Stephens, and Thomas Hovenden (who replaced Eakins in the wake of his dismissal). The practice of artists selecting their peers on the juries, initiated in 1885 and concluded in 1907, served to cleave artists more closely to the institution. It may have been motivated by a perception, right or not, within the community and among the ranks of artists, that Eakins and his cadre exerted too much control over the Academy and its programs. His dismissal must have given renewed hope to amateurs, ladies in search of accomplishment, and entrepreneurial artists, especially those concerned with social mores and those with aspirations of commercial success. Beaux figured among those who were suspicious of Eakins’s morality and his autocratic methods. She said, “A curious instinct of self-preservation kept me outside the magic circle. I watched him from behind staircases, and

\(^{19}\) Beaux to William Sartain, Nov. 10, 1884, William Sartain scrapbooks, vol. 4, PAFA Archives.
corners, at the Academy, and my visit from his apostle Anshutz did not give me as much as did the morsels loosely dropped by his pupils." The 1887 jury, on which Beaux served, expressed a self-conscious middle-of-the-road character that would have spoken volumes to previously alienated artists and students. In any case, this defining moment was rooted in a conservative outlook that the artist and the institution shared.

Beaux's contribution of four works to the 1887 annual, the award to her of a second Mary Smith prize, and a group of works now in the institution's collection provide evidence of that commonality. The prize-winning portrait, *Ethel Page as Undine* (1885; private collection) was joined by a portrait sketch then owned by the artist Prosper Senat (1887; location unknown), a portrait of Reverend Chauncey Giles (1885; location unknown), and a landscape entitled *Afternoon on Stony Hillside* (1887; private collection). Works in the collection produced in that year, include *A Little Girl* (Fanny Travis Cochran) and its sketch (see Connors, figs. 2, 3), and *Harold and Mildred Colton*, and its oil study (see Yount, figs. 1, 3). These chronicle the artist's continuing interest in children as subjects and her arrival as a portrait painter of the grand manner. Little trace of her days as a china painter, save the precision with which figures were rendered, may be found in works from this period.

Had Beaux been satisfied with this early success she would have enjoyed the distinction of a skilled professional painter and a moderate income. However, higher ambitions led her to leverage her success in order to gain her family's support, as well as that of Philadelphia's artistic community, in her pursuit of artistic education in France. Buoyed by the acceptance of *Les derniers jours d'enfance* for display in the Paris Salon of 1887, she embarked on a voyage to France in 1888.

The enormous effect of her European study is evident within the Academy's large group of oils and drawings from her year and a half of European training. Study at the Académie Julian (1888–89) with Tony-Robert Fleury, William Bougereau, and Benjamin Constant, and at the Académie Colorossi (1889) with Gustave Courtois, and P. A. J. Dagnan-Bouveret was supplemented by a summer sojourn in Concarneau (1888). The works produced in that heady atmosphere are a group of grisaille

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20 Beaux, Background, 98; see Tappert, "Choices," 89–97, for discussion of Beaux's assertion that she did not study at the Academy.
paintings and oil sketches that point out at once the technical challenges she faced and the significant strides she made. The *grisailles* all take biblical themes as their subjects—a meaningful statement of aspiration and a consequential, if temporary, departure from portraiture.

These themes posed new problems in terms of complexity in compositional structure and arrangement with regard to space and perspective. Equally formidable were the more esoteric considerations related to the narratives and the expressive pictorial devices. The value of these works resides less in the level of success the artist achieved and more in their revelation of her thoughts and processes. For example, in *Tobias Returning to His Family* (fig. 3) Beaux attempts to capture the expressive power of the moment the son's return becomes evident to his father. Time and its passage

Fig. 3. Beaux, *Tobias Returning to his Family*. Oil on cardboard, ca. 1888, 12 7/8 x 15 1/4", PAFA, Gift of Henry Sandwith Drinker.
are implied in the complex architectural structure around which space is organized (though not always successfully). The pivot upon which all expression rests is a dog bounding through the central doorway as a foreshadowing of the son’s arrival. While effective as a single device it is less so in concert with the work’s other pictorial and narrative elements.

The traditional academic concerns implicit in the grisailles of biblical subjects were complemented by more experimental efforts undertaken in the summer of 1888 in Concarneau, an art colony in Brittany that attracted a host of American painters. T. Alexander Harrison and Charles “Shorty” Lasar, both with ties to Philadelphia and the Pennsylvania Academy, were among them. Beaux credited her criticisms from Lasar with providing her first exposure to issues in art theory, and with teaching her “to have always in sight the simplicity, line, in fact, the style of the Breton ideal. Such influence, silent and without emphasis, ‘falls upon the place beneath’ and reaches interior fibres closely adjacent to the very source of life and energy; reaching with lasting and increasing force.” Her phrasing captures a deepened vision and feeling for the painter’s enterprise. Works in the Academy’s collection from this residency document a decisive shift away from the techniques she acquired through china decoration and illustration toward the problems of pure painting. Moreover, the works Beaux produced in Concarneau reflect a convergence of skills, interests, and a maturity that bred self-assurance.

For example, Landscape with Farm Building (fig. 4) betrays a skillful compositional arrangement and perspective system that utilizes the field depicted in the landscape as a central tool. Similarly, Seaside Inlet discloses a focus on rhythmic strokes, whether broad and unbroken or short and staccato, and hatching to signify form. Her painterly technique and brightened palette reveal the impact of Impressionism. However her tonal values, probably somewhat influenced by William Sartain’s work in landscape, are consistent with earlier works executed in a limited palette. Figure studies including Country Woman, Head of a Woman, and two entitled Head of a French Peasant Woman, reveal a masterful balance of

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21 For a discussion of the lively milieu in Brittany and Normandy see David Sellin, Americans in Brittany and Normandy, 1860–1910, exhibition catalogue, Phoenix Art Museum (Phoenix, 1982). The Academy’s collection contains a sketch of her Concarneau apartment and one of the town layout with the various artist’s studios designated.

22 Beaux, Background, 127, 148.
precision in drawing, deployment of the fluidity of oils, and strong interest in light and color in the development of form. The latter, a career-long preoccupation, she called “the universal sequence . . . with vast variations, Nature's Trinity . . . Light, the Object and its Shadow.”

Beaux's most important production during this sojourn was *Twilight Confidences, Study at Concarneau* (fig. 5) a project represented in the Academy's holdings by a significant group of oil sketches. Aware of the contemporary preoccupation with the quaint aspects of Breton costumes and customs, Beaux was reluctant to embrace such subjects with too much vigor. However, she remembered that she could not “eschew all dealings with 'col

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23 Beaux, *Background*, 128.
and coiffe.' I attempted two life-size heads, at dusk, on the beach; two girls of the merely robust type in conference or gossip—the tones of coiffe and col mingling with the pale blue, rose and celadon of the evening sky."

Considered in tandem with her description of Harrison’s methods, the painting and its preparatory sketches confirm that the project was pivotal in her artistic development. At an early stage of the painting’s creation she wrote, "if I succeed with my two heads it will be the opening of a new era for me, that of working from pochades [sketches] for large simple outdoor

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24 Beaux, Background, 148. See Katus in this volume for discussion of Beaux’s small Concarneau sketchbook, in which she unfortunately used only ten pages.
effects. I can see that the strongest part of what gift I have is my memory of impressions." Preparatory sketches in the Academy’s holdings elucidate Beaux’s integration of techniques from her youthful work with those informed by the example and counsel of her Concarneau mentors. The distinctive attribute of the painting, exhibited in the Academy’s annual exhibition of 1890, and the preparatory studies is the use of color as both a constructive and expressive element.

A study *en grisaille* establishes the painting’s tonal range and sets the figures in the rocky, sparsely foliated Breton shore, and in relation to one another. The precise drawing in certain of the study’s passages recalls the artist’s artistic roots in Harding’s manual, geological drawing, and china painting. The remaining oil sketches in color illustrate her emulation of Harrison’s approach to painting. She remembered, “his attack began with a small study, only a few tones of the choicest, an ébauche [rough sketch] for certain effect, at a certain hour, but whose sign and substance was to last and be the key to all future development of the work.” Seeking “the final sensation,” Harrison’s earliest sketches captured impressions and were “far from faultless in drawing.” Similarly, she was fascinated by his sensitive observation and use of color in large-scale works. “To one who feels color, it is a simple matter to find it on the palette. A small palette yields accidental bits, fortuitous touches . . . but to prepare individual color on a large scale, and with truth of relation on a large canvas, is another matter.” Viewed together the sketches chart the artist’s realization that with an economy of strokes and several carefully chosen colors she could capture the waning light of the day, casting lavender and salmon hues on land, sea, and the crisp white of the women’s “col and coiffe.” Combined with the rosy complexion of the women, these tones supply contrast with the crisp black costumes. A later study of the heads of both figures advances Beaux’s deliberations on color and light as the defining features of form.

The artist’s newly adopted artistic path, in which considerations of color and drawing were integrated, led her to experiments in pastel. Feeling “anxious” about her work and looking for new ways to advance her painting skills, she sought and found in 1889 a new arena for experimentation. She recalled seeing “two or three canvases in the Luxembourg [Museum] that

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26 Beaux, *Background*, 149–150.
27 Ibid, 149.
made me wish to try pastel. They were life-sized portrait compositions, and done as painting, the pastel chosen, and used, in single, unmingled strokes, as a brush. This meant extreme care in the choice of tone used, and a composition, in the sense of subject, textures, and lighting, that would not strain the medium or push it where its power ceased." Her first forays in the medium, portraits of her close friend, Maud Du Puy Darwin (1889; private collection) and Darwin’s acquaintance, Mrs. Ida Goodheart (1889; private collection), were successful. She said, “the gods being with me, I ‘got it’ within the week and was rather more satisfied than usual.” In a letter of July 1889 she extolled what she saw as the medium’s virtues. “I am in raptures over pastel which is . . . especially good for women’s portraits.”

Evidence of that success may be found in Helen Biddle Griscom (fig. 6), a portrait executed four years after those first efforts.

The pastel’s compositional arrangement indicates the persistence of the artist’s interest in “japonisme,” dating from her debut easel painting, Les derniers jours d’enfance. The dramatic cropping of a large frame encloses Miss Griscom’s head and neck. Ornamental patterning, especially that of the subject’s dress, provides opportunities for the artist to unite the interests of gesture and color as well as texture. The pastel’s confident, fluid technique represents a vast expansion of Beaux’s skills since her earliest drawings, and a departure from the relatively flat, wash-like style of Twilight Confidences. It is not surprising that she abandoned the medium a year later, perceiving that it offered no greater value in her efforts to hone her painting skills. Yet the impact of her five-year venture into pastel’s mysteries may be readily observed in later paintings and charcoal portraits. Moreover, her choice of moment to work in this medium, however brief, was timely as many of her renowned contemporaries, Mary Cassatt, William Merritt Chase, and Robert Blum among them, had also explored its merits.

The years surrounding the creation of this pastel portrait saw Beaux rise to become a firmly established star in the Academy’s (and Philadelphia’s)

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28 Beaux, Background, 191, emphasis hers.
29 Ibid.
30 Tappert, Choices, 234–35.
firmament. In 1892 she won the fourth and last of her Mary Smith awards. Two years later she exhibited *Sita and Sarita* (1894; Musée d'Orsay, Paris) and *Ernesta with Nurse* (1894; Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York) in the Academy's annual exhibition. The latter work is represented in the museum's collection by an oil study that, like the other oil studies in the Drinker donation, reveals the artist's compositional choices, especially dynamic cropping, and configuration of forms and volumes. A most charming and appealing rendering of childhood, *Ernesta with Nurse* won
Fig. 7. Beaux, *Reverend Mathew B. Grier*, Oil on canvas mounted on wood, 1892, 49 5/8 x 39 3/8", PAFA, Gift of Anne Farr Bartol.

the Carnegie Institute's bronze medal when it was exhibited in the Pittsburgh institution's first annual exhibition in 1896.32

This moment of ascendance was both artistic and social. In February of 1894, Beaux and Anna Lea Merritt were honored by a reception at the Art Club of Philadelphia. The group's tribute to Beaux marked the award of its gold medal to her portrait of *Reverend Matthew B. Grier* (fig. 7). The affair was described as "one of the most brilliant events which crown with distinction the close of the season" and "the assemblage was a brilliant one which paid fitting tribute to the two gifted women whose achievement places

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32 Beaux's Carnegie medal is now in the Academy's collection.
them to the foremost rank of American artists." Beaux's portrait of Grier signifies her rising ambitions. Its subject, a man of substance (albeit a family neighbor), represents a noteworthy departure from her typical subjects of women and children. Grier, proffering a penetrating gaze, is captured in a thoughtful yet casual moment. Assertively painted in a sober, earthy palette, Beaux's effort is reminiscent of Eakins's work in both its style and its emphasis on personality and mood.

The following year (1895) marked a turning point for Beaux and her relations with the Academy. Her most ambitious painting to date, New England Woman (fig. 8) was exhibited in the institution's annual exhibition and subsequently acquired for its permanent collection through the prestigious Joseph E. Temple Fund. Like the portrayal of Reverend Grier, this likeness of Beaux's second cousin captures mood and personality. Tappert aligns it with another work in the Academy's collection, Mary Rodman Fox (1892), in its description of the sitter's background. While the Fox portrait depicts "a stern, elderly Quakeress," New England Woman is a meditation on the selflessness of women's traditional gender roles and the stoic fortitude traditionally associated with New Englanders. Further, Tappert notes that the old fashioned nature of the sitter's costume and environment refers to the contemporary neo-colonial trend. Stylistically New England Woman advances many ideas and techniques initiated earlier in the artist's career. For example, the painting's composition reflects the same interest in Aesthetic Movement pictorial design that is found in Les dernier jours d'enfance. Its palette and emphasis on capturing the range of colors in white relate to Twilight Confidences, while the discreetly drawn strokes of color recall Helen Biddle Griscom and demonstrate the impact of her work in pastels. Its acquisition followed that of T. Alexander Harrison's The Wave (1891) and Winslow Homer's Fox Hunt (1894), yet preceded that of Eakins's Walt Whitman (1897).

The Academy's purchase of Beaux's New England Woman and her appointment to its faculty brought substantial interaction between the artist and Harrison S. Morris, the institution's visionary managing director who served the Academy from 1892 to 1905. The documentary evidence of his administration speaks to his gift for viewing holistically the institution's

33 Unidentified newspaper clipping, Feb. 2, 1894, Beaux Papers, AAA, microfilm roll 428.
34 Tappert, "Choices," 299ff.
Fig. 8. Beaux, *New England Woman (Mrs. Jedediah H. Richards, née Julia Leavitt)*. Oil on canvas, 1895, 43 x 24 1/4", PAFA.
resources (including its artists) and the potential of those resources. In particular he envisioned and utilized the synergistic relationship between the school’s faculty, curriculum, and students, and the museum’s collection and exhibition program. The professional relationship that he nurtured with Beaux is emblematic of his abiding respect for contemporary artists and their talents. Moreover, it stands as proof that esoteric, ennobling facets of art were not by nature mutually exclusive of business interests. As he summarized in his autobiography, “I had risen out of business. My instincts were of that métier. System, outlook, knowledge of men had been my education. Here I was in a new region where such instincts had never been applied. Was it not natural to mingle art with the knowledge of affairs—apply business to the propagation of beauty? Of course. So, I believe, for the first time in our art’s history, here was an experiment of conducting the business of art as you would conduct the business of commerce.” He recognized that the Academy’s impulse toward insularity would retard the fostering of an expanded national reputation and context for artists working in Philadelphia. Key among his contributions were his efforts to enhance the vitality of the institution’s annual exhibitions by casting aside “the old plan of choosing Philadelphians exclusively” as jurors, and initiating “the better and more liberal one of organizing a Jury of artists from all parts of the country.” He sought Beaux’s assent to serve as a juror on the basis of “the representative position which you hold at home and abroad,” and that reputation “would do much service in a cause which we will all have at heart.” Thus, by extending the invitation, Beaux could be counted among J. Alden Weir, John Twachtman, Theodore Robinson, and others as a rising new talent in American art.

Through both the form and content of his dealings with Beaux and other artists, Morris cultivated a broad view of common interests and goals. For example, when he approached her regarding the possible disposition by sale of New England Woman to “an important public gallery [the Academy]” he invited her to name her lowest price in the “hope of a successful consummation.” Having asked $1000, she was informed that the amount was still a

35 Harrison S. Morris, Confessions in Art (New York, 1930), 20.
36 Morris to Beaux, July 25, 1894, PAFA Archives.
37 Morris to Beaux, Dec. 28, 1895, PAFA Archives.
 problem. However, he wrote, "it would be a great kindness if you would permit me to say a few words about this when you come in on Saturday." Three weeks later they settled on a price of $650. Morris assured her that "we will at once announce the purchase and will hold the picture as a most valuable addition to the Academy's collection of contemporary works." He offered "sincere congratulations to ourselves" for coming to terms. This transaction, and the host of others like it captured in the Academy's archives, show Morris as a canny facilitator, mediator, and negotiator who found opportunities to leverage support for the Academy in whatever form it took and wherever he found it.

Several months after the acquisition was made he contacted Beaux for permission to use her name in association with the "Alumni Society of the Academy students past and present," known today as the Fellowship. In his view Beaux's association was a useful advertisement in the highly competitive environment of art schools. Her success in the annual exhibitions signaled to prospective students that the institution's infrastructure and network would be useful in advancing their careers. He rightly presumed that the Academy could not rest on its historical laurels in an era that saw expanded opportunities for art education at home in Philadelphia and in other American cities, such as New York, Boston, or Chicago. In addition, the ease of travel made study in Europe an option for an increasing number of students. For his part, Morris viewed his role with artists as that of collaborator. He actively sought to sell their works from annual exhibitions, and for luminaries like Beaux, and her contemporary and fellow faculty member, William Merritt Chase, among others, he moved strategically to acquire works for display in the annual exhibitions and for the collection. Moreover, his savvy eye to marketing the exhibitions affected his choice of paintings to illustrate in the catalogues.

In February of 1900, Morris generated a number of letters to potential buyers. Each letter contained the following few sentences, as well as complimentary passes and information about the exhibition's closing date.

The present exhibition of the Academy's is thought by leading artists and art patrons to be the best representation of American Art to this date. It offers the

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38 Morris to Beaux, Jan. 3, 1896, PAFA Archives.
39 Morris to Beaux, Jan. 30, 1896, PAFA Archives.
40 Morris to Beaux, Apr. 29, 1896, PAFA Archives.
opportunity of acquiring work of the highest order at a moderate expenditure and your well-known interest in pictures leads us to hope that you can find something in the collection which you would care to purchase. Each purchase by an American of an American picture serves to advance native art.\textsuperscript{42}

He routinely accepted diagrams from Beaux regarding the placement and arrangement of her annual exhibition displays. In 1899 he wrote “so far as I can reveal the doings of the Hanging Committee, I may say that you will not be disappointed with the hanging of your pictures provided the present plan holds. The disposition of the Committee is to do what you desire.”\textsuperscript{43}

A review of the catalogues suggests that considerable care was taken to represent Morris’s view that the work of Philadelphia’s artists matched the quality of nationally and internationally renowned figures, such as John Singer Sargent, Winslow Homer, and others. The 1902 catalogue reproduced Beaux’s Portrait of Mrs. Isaac Newton Phelps Stokes (1900–1901; private collection) opposite Homer’s Wild Geese, heightening the contrast between the genteel elegance painted by the former, and the virile, elemental world portrayed by the latter. The following year Beaux’s Portrait (Mrs. Alexander Sedgwick and daughter Christina, 1902; private collection) was illustrated opposite Sargent’s portrait of P. A. B. Widener. The former artist’s reputation for maternal subjects remained unassailed by the latter’s rather formal rendering of the August businessman and collector. However, in 1904 Sargent’s The Misses Hunter appeared alone as the first of the catalogue’s illustrations while Beaux’s portrait of Harriet Sears Amory (1903; Wellesley College) appeared as the last of the illustrations pictured opposite the first page of entries. One imagines Morris pondering the wisdom of pitting Beaux’s charming image of childhood against Sargent’s of womanhood.

Morris’s particular concern for Beaux’s career and her association with the Academy are clearly evident in the correspondence related to her extraordinary Mother and Daughter (Mrs. Clement Acton Griscom and Frances Canby Griscom) of 1898 (fig. 9). Its appearance in the Carnegie Institute’s annual of 1899 won for her its prestigious gold medal. His congratulatory telegram entreated, “do promise it to us.”\textsuperscript{44} A lengthy letter he composed the next day

\textsuperscript{42} Morris to J. C. Stillwell, Feb. 21, 1900, PAFA Archives. Customized form letters written on the same day to others, including George W. Morris and Alfred Gaskell, use the same paragraph.

\textsuperscript{43} Morris to Beaux, Jan. 6, 1899, PAFA Archives.

\textsuperscript{44} Morris to Beaux, Nov. 6, 1899, PAFA Archives.
Fig. 9. Beaux, *Mother and Daughter* (*Mrs. Clement Acton Griscom and Frances Canby Griscom*). Oil on canvas, 1898, 83 x 44", PAFA, Gift of Frances C. Griscom.
pressed the point and sought to reclaim it from Pittsburgh for Philadelphia and the Academy. He wrote, "It seems poetic justice that it should come here to your artistic home after winning glory elsewhere." Ultimately the painting was the keynote of the three works she showed in the Academy's 1900 annual exhibition. The Pittsburgh award was quickly answered by the Academy with the award of its prestigious Temple Gold Medal for the best figure painting. While Beaux continued to have a long and mutually productive relationship with both Morris and the Academy, the Temple Gold Medal firmly established her as one of the institution's most important historical figures. Morris's unique point of view favorably positioned her work in the literature that continues to frame the Academy's views of its past and the historian's view of American art. In an article, Morris described Beaux's work as capturing the nation's hopes for its future. His preparations for the institution's centennial exhibition in 1905 led him to make a showman's promise to her that it would be "the greatest show on earth." Their joint care in selecting work for that exhibition, and her inclusion in his analysis of Philadelphia's primacy as an art capital, fixed the view maintained today that Beaux's artistic education, her career as a painter, and her work as a teacher are inextricably tied to the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts. Thus, through successful negotiations of "intricacies and interdependencies" the artist traveled quite far from her youthful assertion that she owed no debt to the grand old institution. It was a most auspicious and fortuitous journey for all, now as then.

Delaware Art Museum

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45 Morris to Beaux, Nov. 7, 1899, PAFA Archives.
47 Morris to Beaux, Oct. 31, 1904, PAFA Archives.